



The Florida House of Representatives

Office of the Speaker

Richard Corcoran
Speaker

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 23, 2017

SPEAKER RICHARD CORCORAN ASKS CONSTITUTION REVISION COMMISSION TO END WELFARE FOR POLITICIANS AND REPEAL PUBLIC FINANCING OF STATEWIDE POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

*The Speaker, Joined by Commerce Chairman Jim Boyd, Seek Repeal of a Program that Gives
Millions of Your Tax Dollars to Political Campaigns*

Tallahassee, FL – Speaker Richard Corcoran along with Commerce Committee Chairman Jim Boyd, today sent a letter to the Constitution Revision Commission seeking the repeal of Article VI, Section 7 of the Florida Constitution that provides for public financing of statewide political campaigns.

Upon sending the letter Speaker Corcoran said, **"This is a gross waste of taxpayer money and is nothing more than welfare for politicians. All it does is protect the insider political class. You really have to be clueless or just plain selfish to accept money from our state coffers that could go to our schoolchildren, first responders, or be put back in the pockets of our taxpayers. This proposal is simply about doing the right thing."**

Chairman Boyd went on to say, **"I'm proud to join the Speaker and I'm sure many of my colleagues in offering of this repeal proposal. Over \$10 million of taxpayer money has been spent on political campaigns since 2010. That's \$10 million that went to political consultants, TV ad buyers, and politicians instead of school kids, substance abuse treatment, or veterans. That is unacceptable and repeal of the provision in the Constitution is the way to end this practice."**

To see the total amount spent by office in candidate, please visit the following links:

2014 - <http://dos.myflorida.com/elections/candidates-committees/campaign-finance/public-campaign-finance-2014/>

2010 - <http://dos.myflorida.com/elections/candidates-committees/campaign-finance/public-campaign-finance-2010/>

Public Campaign Finance Fact Sheet:

- Article VI, section 7 was proposed by the CRC in 1998 and adopted by the voters that year.
- It states that, “It is the policy of this state to provide for state-wide elections in which all qualified candidates may compete effectively. A method of public financing for campaigns for state-wide office shall be established by law. Spending limits shall be established for such campaigns for candidates who use public funds in their campaigns. The legislature shall provide funding for this provision. “
- F.S. 106.31 states, “... it is the intent of the Legislature that the purpose of public campaign financing is to make candidates more responsive to the voters of the State of Florida and as insulated as possible from special interest groups.”
- In order for a candidate to receive public money, they must
 1. Agree to abide by expenditure limits set in law.
 2. Raise contributions (with some exceptions) as follows:
 - One hundred fifty thousand dollars for a candidate for Governor.
 - One hundred thousand dollars for a candidate for Cabinet office.
 - A candidate who has been certified to receive contributions shall be entitled to the funds as follows:
 1. For qualifying matching contributions up to the amounts specified for Governor and Cabinet positions, distribution shall be on a two-to-one basis.
 2. For all other qualifying matching contributions, distribution shall be on a one-to-one basis.
 - Qualifying matching contributions are those of \$250 or less from an individual, made after September 1 of the calendar year prior to the election. Aggregate contributions from an individual in excess of \$250 will be matched only up to \$250. A contribution from an individual, if made by check, must be drawn on the personal bank account of the individual making the contribution.

- Any candidate for Governor and Lieutenant Governor or Cabinet officer who requests contributions from the Election Campaign Financing Trust Fund shall limit his or her total expenditures as follows:
 1. Governor and Lieutenant Governor: \$2.00 for each Florida-registered voter (approximately \$13 million).
 2. Cabinet officer: \$1.00 for each Florida-registered voter.
 - The expenditure limit for any candidate with primary election opposition only shall be 60 percent of the limit provided above.

The letter from the Speaker and Chairman Boyd is reprinted below:

BEGIN

August 23, 2017

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for your service as appointees to the Constitution Revision Commission. As you are considering possible proposals to bring before the Commission, we respectfully request that you consider the repeal of Article VI, Section 7, which requires the state to maintain a system to publicly finance campaigns for statewide office.

Our electoral system should be a competitive marketplace of ideas where voters are able to hear different messages and select the candidates that best reflect their vision for our state. However, public campaign financing in Florida serves as nothing more than welfare payments for politicians and their political consultants.

Markets and technological innovation usually do more to solve social problems than do government programs. We are living in an age of unprecedented access to information. The numerous social media platforms that exist today make it possible to reach voters rapidly, inexpensively, and in ways that would have seemed impossible twenty years ago. Candidates no longer have to rely exclusively on traditional paid media platforms to talk to voters. In fact, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled clearly that the state's purpose to equalize competition violates the First Amendment rights of candidates and contributors¹.

Rather than leveling the playing field, public campaign financing has been used to subsidize statewide candidates, mostly incumbents, when they are facing weak opposition. Simply put: politicians benefit, voters do not. Pollsters, media buyers, mail houses, and campaign consultants benefit while the people of Florida are left holding the bill.

Taxpayer dollars are a precious resource because they are finite. We have numerous demands from the growth in Medicaid or the increase in K-12 enrollment and higher education. In addition, we have to be ready to deal with natural disasters like hurricanes or social problems like the opioid crisis. With all the demands on taxpayer money, spending tax dollars on welfare for politicians should never even be on the list.

Taxpayer-funding of politicians should offend our common sensibilities because it requires our citizens to finance political speech with which they may disagree. The First Amendment guarantees the right to free speech, but it does not guarantee that the method of delivering that speech is to be paid for with a government check.

Public financing of statewide campaigns has not achieved any of its purported goals, it has been rendered obsolete by changes in technology, and it is a misuse of taxpayer money that should be spent on real state priorities.

As a taxpayer-funded Commission, we know you take your fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers very seriously. We stand ready to work with you in any way to further this goal and thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this proposal and your service to the citizens of Florida.

Sincerely,

/s/ Representative Richard Corcoran, Speaker of the House

/s/ Representative Jim Boyd, Chairman, Commerce Committee

END

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¹[Scott v. Roberts](#), 612 F.3d 1279 (2010)